



Giron Sámi Teáhter

The theatre
of the Sami people





GIRON SÁMI TEÁHTER is the theatre of the Sami people. Our roots lie in the independent theatre company *Dálvadis* which toured extensively in Europe and in North and South America with performances based on Sami culture in the Sami language.

OUR THEATRE HAS IT'S HOME IN GIRON located 145 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. We are in constant motion, producing two to three productions each year and playing for all ages. We frequently collaborate or co-produce and organize workshops and discussions for the development of Sami culture and language. Productions are toured primarily in the traditional Sami settlement areas in the north of Sweden, in major cities and abroad.





THE SAMI PEOPLE occupy the northern reaches of four countries; Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. We are the only indigenous people within the EU. Historically the Sami were known in English as Lapps, a name which still has distinct colonial and repressive connotations. We were a nomadic hunting and gathering people who began to domesticate reindeer. Reindeer have since then been an integral part of Sami culture and economy.

WE DEVELOPED a rich culture in the north. We moved with the reindeer herds between summer and winter pastures, fished the coasts, lakes and rivers of the North. We were blessed with a unique style of singing which has survived for centuries and is performed today, both in traditional settings and in popular contexts like Eurovision Song Contest.

COLONIALIZATION of the northern lands in Sweden began in the 1300's, intensifying greatly after 1650. We suffered the same indignities as other indigenous peoples around the world. Such as forced

religious conversions, suppression of language, religion and culture, and the burning of our sacred drums. Children were forced into Swedish boarding schools where they were bullied and discriminated against. The establishment of the *Institute of Race Biology* led to a humiliating measuring of skulls and the photographing of naked bodies. Gravesites were dug up and the skulls carted away to laboratories.

A STRUGGLE FOR our civil rights, for our traditional ways and the custodianship of the land, and protection of nature from mining companies and similar industries; the same story as other indigenous people around the world. In 2007 United Nations adopted the *Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights*. We now have a tool to use in these struggles, which continue today in the courts of Sweden and the European Union. In 2019 the Sami Parliament made a formal request to the Swedish Government to establish a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* to redress past injustices. The request was denied.

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